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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 003085

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: DPJ RAMPS UP ATTACK, AS MOD TAKES HIT FOR TAMOGAMI
ESSAY

REF: TOKYO 3069

Classified By: DCM JAMES P. ZUMWALT, REASONS 1.4 (B),(D).

11. (C) Summary: Defense Minister Hamada and three other parliamentarians have taken voluntary pay cuts and three senior MOD bureaucrats have been disciplined as the government continues to manage the controversy over an essay published by former ASDF Chief Tamogami. The country's most senior military officer has expressed concern that this incident could damage the reputation of the SDF domestically and lead to calls for more stringent oversight. That concern may be justified by opposition plans to summon Tamogami to the Diet for an inquiry into the need for greater civilian control, particularly given the evidence of other similar incidents. High level officials confirm that the scandal will definitely delay passage of the OEF refueling bill.
End Summary.

Aso Forces MOD Officials to Take Responsibility

12. (C) Minister of Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada has volunteered to return his base salary for November, in the government's latest response to a controversial essay drafted by former Air Self-Defense Forces (ASDF) Chief of Staff Toshio Tamogami. Hamada told the press he elected to punish himself for his failure to properly supervise General Tamogami. Three other ruling party lawmakers serving in senior appointments to MOD followed Hamada's lead, taking a voluntary cut of 50 percent. Three senior bureaucrats, including Vice Minister Kohei Masuda, have received official reprimands. Masuda also took a 10 percent cut in pay for November. At least one of the career officials was deemed to have prior knowledge of the essay. Prime Minister Taro Aso made clear to Hamada on November 4 that he expected relevant officials to be punished and measures to be put in place to tighten civilian control over Self-Defense Forces (SDF)

personnel. He also tasked Hamada with providing an explanation to the public. The PM's decision to sack Tamogami was fairly straightforward, Vice Foreign Minister Hitoshi Yabunaka told the Ambassador November 4. He also credited Aso's quick action for the relatively mild reaction from Japan's Asian neighbors.

Setback for SDF

13. (C) The SDF has worked very hard over the past 60 years to be accepted, recognized and trusted by the people of Japan, both through its disaster relief/humanitarian assistance activities at home and through operations abroad, Chief of the Joint Staff Office Admiral Takeshi Saito told U.S. Forces Japan Commander Lt. Gen. Edward Rice November 4. He expressed concern that Tamogami's comments could damage this carefully cultivated reputation and lead the public to demand that the SDF be "better controlled or tamed." Saito reaffirmed to Gen. Rice that the views espoused in the essay are contradictory to the government's official position and inappropriate for a senior SDF official. He noted that while he would normally be the "dominant voice" in determining Tamogami's successor, the politicization of the issue meant it was out of the SDF's hands.

Opposition Focuses on Civilian Control

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14. (C) The main opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and three other opposition parties have agreed to summon Tamogami to testify before the Diet as early as November 11. The questioning is expected to focus on the government's responsibility for appointing Tamogami, despite his well-known nationalist views, and for allowing the essay to go forward. The opposition continues to criticize the government for "lacking public accountability" by allowing Tamogami to retire voluntarily. Tamogami refused to resign on October 31 when the essay became public, and could only be retired involuntarily after being dismissed from his position as Chief of Staff, MOD officials have confirmed to the Embassy. Opposition party leaders have pointed to the lack of specific provisions for removal of SDF personnel in such circumstances as further evidence of inadequate civilian control. Admiral Saito confirmed that MOD is powerless to pursue disciplinary action against Tamogami despite the government's desire to do so. He also mentioned that he had not been aware of the essay until its publication on October 31.

Similar Cases Seemingly Widespread

15. (C) News reports November 5 noted that more than 50 SDF personnel may have entered essays in the same contest, out of a total of 230 entries. An MOD survey has reportedly revealed that more than 50 SDF personnel had either notified or consulted with their supervisors over plans to submit essays. SDF personnel are required to notify the Ministry in writing in advance whenever speaking or writing on a subject related to their official duties. Tamogami is said to have notified the Ministry orally, having judged that the content was not related to his official duties. Tamogami has "always been difficult to handle," VFM Yabunaka told the Ambassador, citing frequent complaints from MOD counterpart Masuda. Perhaps Tamogami wanted the last word as he prepared to leave the ASDF, he surmised. VFM Yabunaka labeled Tamogami's essay "cheap," noting that even right-wing intellectuals had been critical. "He could have made the same points in a more intellectually permissive way," he added.

OEF Delays Likely to Grow

16. (C) Tamogami's testimony before the opposition-controlled Upper House Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee will definitely delay deliberations on anti-terror refueling legislation, according to VFM Yabunaka. Admiral Saito agreed on the likelihood of Diet delays, and also lamented the wider possible impact on MOD reform. The DPJ continues to resist ruling coalition efforts to call a vote on the refueling measure, but cannot stall beyond December 21, when the bill can be passed into law by a two-thirds re-vote in the Lower House. The bill is intended to authorize the continuation of Maritime SDF refueling activities in the Indian Ocean in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) beyond January 15, 2009.
SCHIEFFER